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AUTHOR Putnam, Linda L.; VanHoeven, Shirley A.
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ABSTRACT

A study tested a model of bargaining rite by examining procedural rituals, organized fantasies, and ritualistic language in teachers' negotiations. Specifically, it sought to identify the communicative forms that create shared consciousness, to describe shared fantasies, to illustrate the role of group fantasy in forming rhetorical visions, and to demonstrate how fantasy themes and ritualistic behaviors support the symbolic value of the bargaining rite. Two researchers observed approximately 40 hours of negotiation sessions between six members of an administrative team and six members of a teachers' team from a large, unionized, suburban school district. Four approaches of observation were used: (1) observations and detailed field notes, (2) interviews, (3) survey questionnaires, and (4) document analysis. Analysis of the data provided interesting conclusions about the rhetorical vision of collective bargaining in the district. The negotiation deviated from the model being tested, in that the ritualistic behaviors in the negotiation did not parallel the model's view of bargaining as a rite of conflict reduction. Instead, the negotiations reinforced the current authority system and communicated that traditions are sacred. The results suggested that further research is needed to determine how and why fantasy themes and rhetorical visions evolve for bargaining participants. A three-page bibliography is included. (DF)

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TEACHER BARGAINING AS A CULTURAL RITE OF CONFLICT REDUCTION

Linda L. Putnam
Purdue University

and

Shirley A. VanHoeven
Western Michigan University

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TEACHER BARGAINING AS A CULTURAL RITE OF CONFLICT REDUCTION

Linda L. Putnam and Shirley VanHoeven

Labor-management relations are crucial to the effectiveness of any organization. In unionized organizations, collective bargaining is a ritualized activity, an annual rite-of-conflict reduction through which management and labor make legally binding decisions about salaries, fringe benefits, working conditions, and organizational policy.

As an organizational rite, bargaining is more than a way to reach a contractual settlement. Rather it is a process of constructing social reality--a means of negotiating shared meanings between labor and management. Through interactions and interpretations of these interactions, labor and management enact their bargaining environment. Specifically, negotiation teams communicate separately to interpret the other party's position and to anticipate moves that the opponent might make. The two teams then construct a new collaborative social reality from their interactions at the table and their reactions during caucus meetings. Thus, shared meanings develop from revising expectations and interpretations of messages and merging two distinct social realities. In this sense, integrative bargaining is not only a form of joint problem solving; it is a collaborative effort in constructing collective meanings of the bargaining process, contractual issues, and labor-management relationships. This process of constructing consensual meaning is also a form of shared consciousness that emerges from an organization's practices, rituals, fantasies, and sagas.

This paper adopts symbolic convergence theory to analyze the rituals and stories that form a shared consciousness within bargaining teams and between

management and labor. This paper treats bargaining as a rite-of-conflict reduction in labor-management relations enacted through ritualized behaviors and sharing fantasy themes about organizational life.

Review of Literature

Recent work in organizational communication purports an interpretive perspective on social understanding (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983) and a cultural view of organizational life (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983; 1982). The myriad of studies on organizational culture has treated culture as a very general, all-encompassing construct that subsumes all other phenomena (Trice & Beyer, 1984). In this study, the term "culture" represents "a system of . . . publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time" (Trice & Beyer, 1984, p. 654). It consists of two basic components: "(1) its substance, or the networks of meanings contained in its ideologies, norms, and values; and (2) its forms, or the practices, whereby these meanings are expressed, affirmed and communicated to members" (Trice & Beyer, 1984, p. 654). This paper examines culture through an analysis of the rituals and fantasy themes of negotiators, team members, and constituents. It summarizes research in progress that aims to provide a detailed systematic study of the rituals and stories generated during a bargaining episode and about a long-term labor-management relationship. It specifically focuses on the way the fantasies and the rituals characterize the development of a common group consciousness.

Literature Review

Symbolic Convergence Theory

A theory of communication that centers directly on the development of group consciousness is symbolic convergence theory (Bormann, 1983, 1985).

Symbolic convergence is a general theory that accounts for the creation and maintenance of a group consciousness, consisting of shared emotions, motives, and meanings for organizational events. "Symbolic convergence creates, maintains, and allows people to achieve empathic communion as well as a meeting of the minds" (Bormann, 1983, pp. 102). Symbolic convergence consists of three parts: (1) a discovery of the way communicative forms and practices evolve into structured patterns that create shared consciousness, (2) a description of the dynamics of people sharing group fantasies, and (3) explanation of why people share group fantasies (Bormann, 1983, p. 101). Convergence, as a form of consensual meaning, refers "to the way that two or more private symbolic worlds incline toward each other, come more closely together, or even overlap during certain processes of communication" (Bormann, 1983, p. 102).

This theoretical perspective forms the foundation for this study because (1) it runs counter to the rational models of negotiation such as game theory and social exchange theory; (2) it moves beyond the cognitive models of negotiated meaning such as coorientation processes, scripts, and negotiated order; and (3) it offers a coherent framework for examining ritualistic practices as cultural forms and organizational stories as bargaining substance. In effect, symbolic convergence offers a theoretical model for investigating how people construct meanings together, one that encompasses sentiments, emotions, and political views of organizing.

Organizational Stories, Fantasy Themes,

And the Sharing of Group Fantasies

Organizational stories are a popular phenomenon for cultural investigation. Stories refer to narratives that reflect a folklore quality (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell Trujillo, 1982), oral history of the organizational

past (Martin, 1982), and narratives interpreted in mythical forms (Kirk, 1970). Stories can be developed from actual events or happenings or they can be fictional. In either case they constitute a symbolic reflection of the organization's beliefs, values, and ideologies. Most of the studies on organizational stories center on their functions; specifically on the role of stories in socializing newcomers, in solving problems (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1975); in enhancing cultural identification (Martin, 1982); in glorifying heros and identifying villains (Kirk, 1970); in legitimating power relationships (Bormann, Pratt, & Putnam, 1978); in providing entertainment (Kirk, 1970); and in giving an historical texture to organizations (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). This historical texture stems from the telling and retelling of stories that link an organization's present with its past. Most of the research on stories treats story-telling as an act rather than a process. These investigations, while capturing the types and themes of stories, fail to grasp the way story-telling evolves and the way this process leads to symbolic convergence.

Fantasy themes are stories or incidents in which the action and plots take place outside the here-and-now setting of the communicators. In small groups it takes the form of a digression from the here-and-now task deliberations (Bales, 1970; Bormann, 1975). A fantasy employs dramatic imagery that usually follows a narrative structure, complete with plot lines, villains, heroes and heroines, settings, and emotional intensity. The sharing of group fantasies entails the psychological process of being caught up in the story, having sympathy with the leading characters, demise for the antagonist, and suspense for the outcome. Organizational members who share a fantasy in the same way begin to develop similar attitudes and emotional responses. They interpret some aspects of their experience similarly, thus achieving a type of symbolic

convergence (Bormann, 1983, p. 104). Through the process of sharing fantasies, organizational members become aware of their group identity, particularly when fantasies distinguish the "we" group from the "they" of the others (Bormann, 1983, p. 106).

But fantasies do not exist as isolated stories. They occur in rhetorical communities among members who share a number of fantasies in a rhetorical visions. Rhetorical visions, then, are unified shared fantasies that reveal how the organization relates to its environment and to its subdivisions. They are indexed through slogans, labels, and master analogies. They resemble Sykes' (1970) use of the term "myth," as a symbolic interpretation of an experience or Trice and Beyer's use of legendary myths.

An organizational saga incorporates shared fantasies and rhetorical visions into an historical narrative that describes the unique accomplishments of a group and its leader (Clark, 1972). It encompasses the values and ideologies that undergird rhetorical visions and that characterize group achievements. Thus, it may be shared by only a portion of the formal membership and its undergirds what type of organization is represented and for what purpose.

Rites and Rituals

Organizational sagas, rhetorical visions, and fantasy themes address the substance or the networks of shared consciousness within an organization. Rites and rituals, however, concentrate on the events and practices that enact, alter, and reflect organizational culture. Thus, they serve as behavioral forms shaped by rhetorical and symbolic boundaries. Although rites and rituals originate through the sharing of fantasies, they can alter the symbolic meaning of fantasies and form the basis for new rhetorical visions. A

rite is "a relatively elaborate, dramatic set of activities that consolidates cultural expressions into one event" (Trice & Beyer, 1984, p. 655). This event is typically carried out through social interaction (Bocock, 1974) and for a designated audience. Rites and ceremonies are social dramas that involve deliberate planning, careful management, and rehearsed sets of behaviors (Kluckhohn 1942; Van Gennep, 1960). Rites and ceremonies are also symbolic forms that make public the organization's private values and attitudes (Bocock, 1974; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Fontenrose, 1971). As sets of observable activities, rites occur repeatedly, usually at regular or patterned time intervals (Chapple, 1970; Fontenrose, 1971). They perform both instrumental and emotional functions in that they lead to technical and expressive consequences. For example, the conferral of tenure in universities serves as an evaluation of faculty performance (technical consequences) and an annointment of social identification (expressive consequences).

Nested within this framework of rites and ceremonies are ritualistic behaviors that serve as norms, sanctions, and rules to guide appropriate actions. Rituals manage anxieties and socialize the individual into the group, but they rarely take on the <u>public significance</u> and <u>planned event</u> nature that typifies rites and ceremonies (Fortes, 1962; Laughlin, McManus, & d'Aquili, 1979). Rituals are routinized and repeatable, but they occur in scripted rather than planned and carefully managed behaviors. Since rituals are acted out within ceremonies, however, the concepts are often used interchangeably. Examples of rituals include a greeting in the form of a handshake or embrace, coffee breaks, gift giving, staff meetings, and Friday afternoon bull sessions. Rites and ceremonies, however, take on a more public nature such as retirement dinners, award ceremonies, and orientation sessions for new employees (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1984).

Stories that are recounted at formal and informal organizational meetings become ritualistic behavior. That is, in some organizational settings it becomes expected behavior for members to share fantasies at specific sessions. For instance, lunch and coffee breaks may routinely entail the sharing of fantasies about political conspiracies, motives of organizational leaders, or gossip and rumors embellished in narrative form. Company staff meetings might begin or end with ritualistic stories about the founding of the organization, its charasmatic leaders, or its loyalty to customers (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976). These oral histories or fantasies about significant events emanate from and feed into a company's rhetorical vision.

Rites of Organizational Conflict Reduction

Trice and Beyer (1984) present a typology of six different rites with distinctive manifest and latent consequences. The six types are rites of passage, degredation, enhancement, renewal, conflict reduction, and integration. Rites of conflict reduction and have particular significance for this investigation. Political models of organizations treat conflict as an inevitable and pervasive aspect of organizational life (Pfeffer, 1981). Organizations are comprised of a heterogeneous workforce with a diversity of values. Different groups promote their own goals which leads to a multiplicity of competing and frequently contradictory objectives. These differences in goals become particularly evident in times of retrenchment, resource scarcity, and time constraints; however any form of budget allocation entails advocacy and bargaining between cooperative, yet competing groups.

Trice & Beyer (1984) characterize collective bargaining as a rite of conflict reduction in that it performs a peace-making ceremony between two vying factions. In a model that resembles the dance of two rival groups of

North Andamen Islanders, the dancers form into two physically separate groups, express hostile or aggressive feelings to each other, while the opposing group remains firm (Radcliffe-Brown, 1964). Bargaining rites, however, are more vehement in tone than this peace-making dance. The archetype of bargaining cast the union and management as adversaries with an inherent conflict of interest. Both sides present long lists of extravagant and divergent demands; both face off at the conference table; and both reassure their respective opponents of their commitments to demands through posturing, tough behavior, and "false fights" (Trice & Beyer, 1984). Embedded within this ritualistic activity is the belief that bargaining takes place between equals and that both sides generally know what the final settlement will be. When a settlement is near, the union negotiator typically becomes hostile and threatens to leave the scene. Management responds in a ritualistic manner through reducing tensions, finding compromises, and pointing to areas of cooperation.

Conflict is reduced through the symbolic value of the "willingness to bargain in good faith." Bargaining represents a form of worker participation that helps to mollify dissatisfied and hostile groups. It symbolizes the willingness of authorities to cope with problems, to listen, and to pay attention to the complaints of participants (Trice & Beyer, 1984). The expressive consequences of bargaining rites are (1) to minimize status differences that underlie conflicts and (2) to emphasize equality. Latent consequences suggest that bargaining deflects attention away from solving major problems and keeps it from disrupting the organizational equilibrium (Trice & Beyer, 1984). In this sense, rites of conflict reduction like rites of renewal, are aimed at refurbishing existing structures. Rites of renewal member that problems are being addressed, but in doing so, they disguise the nature of real problems by legitimating the authority of the existing system.

This study tests Trice & Beyer's model of bargaining rites through the examination of procedural rituals, organizational fantasies, and ritualistic language in a teachers' negotiation. It aims to uncover the communicative forms that create shared consciousness, to describe shared fantasies, and to illustrate the role of group fantasies in forming rhetorical visions. Finally, it aims to demonstrate how fantasies themes and ritualistic behaviors support the symbolic value of the bargaining rite.

Methodology

Participants and School District

The participants in this study are members of a large suburban township. The school district employs 485 teachers and 25 administrators and includes 10 schools that enroll approximately 8,055 students. The district is 80% unionized, with approximately 389 teachers belonging to the local and state NEA affiliate. The township administrators have negotiated informally with the teachers eight years prior to the passage of Public Law 217, the state's Public Employee's Bargaining Act; hence the district has a long history of administrative-teacher negotiations. This history has produced a 120-page contract, one vaunted by the union as "the most complete contract in the state."

Under the law the administration must bargain over salary, hours, fringe benefits, grievances, and arbitration of unresolved grievances. The administration must discuss working conditions, curriculum, class size, pupil-teacher ratio, reduction in force, and budget appropriations, but are not required to include them in the contract. However, once they appear in the contract, these items are open for negotiation from year to year. The school district under study has incorporated a number of these "discussable" issues

into the bargaining arena. If a settlement is not reached, the bargainers can employ fact-finding or mediation, but strikes are disallowed by law. The state ranks 48th in its aid to public education; hence teachers' salaries have been considerably low for a number of years. Since this district receives additional monies for military students and bussing programs, raises are generally higher than in other townships across the state.

Procedures

Two researchers observed approximately 40 hours of negotiation sessions, interspersed with an additional 14 hours of caucus meetings. These sessions comprised over 54 hours of observation. Bargaining sessions covered a period of 11 days, lasting 3 or 4 hours per day for some sessions of 15 hours for the more lengthy ones.

The administrative team consisted of six people--the assistant superintendent, who was the chief negotiator for the team, three principals, crossing high school, middle school, and elementary schools, one assistant principal, and one staff employee from the central office. All but one of the members had served on previous teams; most had served for four or five years. The administrative team reported to an elected school board, one that delegated most contract decisions to the bargaining team, with the exception of final approval for percentage of raises.

The teachers' team was comprised of six members--the local union president, the past president of the union, and four elected representatives from elementary, middle, and high schools. Only two of these six had served on previous negotiation teams. The union president was the chief bargainer and had never negotiated a contract before this session. The teachers' team worked with a Uniserv director, a hired union official for this particular district.

He helped them prepare their contract proposals and served as their consultant throughout the negotiations.

Teachers and administrators described this bargaining episode as low in conflict and high in trust, characterized by some, but not a large number of "burning issues." 83% of the 128 respondents to our survey were highly satisfied with monetary items in the settlement; 41% were highly satisfied with the language items; 61% were far more satisfied this year than in previous years.

Data Collection

The researchers employed a multi-method approach to the collection of data. Four methods were used--observations and detailed field notes (approximately 1,300 pages of transcription), interviews, survey questionnaires, and document analysis. Two observers took extensive field notes on the bargaining and the caucus sessions. Field notes contained a near-verbatim dialogue of interactions as well as notes on the general atmosphere and overall framework of the event. Field notes were expanded and typed into full notes shortly after the observations.

Seventeen one-hour interviews were conducted with members of both bargaining teams and with teachers who did not serve on the current team (5 non-team members). Interviews sought information on bargaining history, perceptions of the negotiation process, origin and perceptions of bargaining issues, and links between bargaining issues and organizational communication. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcripts were typed to aid with data analysis.

In additon, questionnaires were prepared and sent to a random sample of 300 teachers; 128 of them were returned. Questionnaires tapped priorities of

issues, satisfaction with the settlement, and organizational factors that might contribute to the settlement. Finally, the researchers collected copies of the immediate past contract, the teachers' initial proposal, and all written counterproposals exchanged at the table.

Data Analysis

This particular project employs the transcripts of the 17 one-hour interviews; hence, it represents only a preliminary attempt to isolate fantasy themes and bargaining rituals. Conclusions drawn from this preliminary analysis are tentative, pending analyses of the bargaining and caucus dialogue.

In the first stage of this analysis, the researchers read through the interview transcripts to get a feel for the negotiation context. Then they isolated three aspects of bargaining rites: (1) observable routinized procedures evident in the bargaining, e.g., place, time, seating, signing of the contract; (2) fantasy themes and historical narratives recurring in the bargaining rite; and (3) language patterns that became ritualistic and unique to the bargaining. These language systems paralleled "inside jokes" or abbreviated fantasies.

Data for each of these aspects were plotted on large computer sheets and tracked for each interviewee. We separated data from each teach to construct shared consciousness of the bargaining for each team. Then we looked for similarities in the values and motives of the fantasies that would reflect a symbolic convergence on the meaning of this bargaining rite.

Results

Administrators Perspective

Procedural Rituals. The administrators recounted a number of patterned behaviors that functioned as procedural rituals. Namely, any change from last

year's contract was viewed as giving in on the part of the administration. The administration tried to sell language in the contract by working from the extreme to the middle ground. But the administration could not give in on power issues such as binding arbitration. In negotiations, once you've made an offer, you don't change it. Extreme offers were viewed as tension release. The teachers knew we wouldn't give 10 days of personal leave. However, an extreme offer on high priority items such as salary was a sign of unreasonableness. For instance, the teachers' initial offer was for a 12% raise, not a 25% raise--it was exaggerated, but reasonable.

Caucus meetings served as sounding board sessions, a chance for re-grouping and collecting your thoughts. It was not customary for an administrator to take the teacher's side in the caucus meetings. Moreover, we used this time to bad mouth the teachers. Negotiations were characterized as informal, both parties laid out what they wanted and took stands. Neither side engaged in the Peacock dance or the angry rituals of formal negotiations. The administrators, then, described the bargaining process as informal and reasonable, characterized by administrators selling language items, but not power issues, and by the teachers making reasonable opening bids on salary.

Fantasy Themes. The dominant fantasy theme that administrators shared was the time when a professional negotiator, a lawyer with a doctorate degree, was hired to bargain for the administrators. He was an outsider to education. He could not relate to the problems that teachers face. He didn't know what was going on and he was expensive. Similar stories were conveyed about fact finders who had been called in as Big Brother to tell the teachers, "see we told you so." Also a lawyer who advised the teachers to test the contract through arbitration hearings. The teachers lost, it cost them a great deal, and the faculty member who pushed for the lawyer became unpopular within the

union. A similar theme runs through the story of kicking the accountant off of the administrator's team. He was a seedy character who could not be trusted. He disguised his conservative policy of school finance in unclear spread sheets. The rhetorical vision that unifies these scenarios depicts a "we" against "them" orientation. The enemy, however, is the 3rd party interventionist who make trouble for the negotiations. A value implicit in the vision is that effective bargaining must be handled by the insiders who know the rules.

Fantasy themes about the teacher's team cast them as naive, hard working, but very inexperienced. Stories were told about the initial sarcasm of Susie, the teacher's negotiator--she came in sounding like a union mimick, a real hard-nose that was opposite her normal behavior, but her arguments were weak and illogical. The former teacher's negotiator, Bonnie, was a tough-minded, rational bargainer. The administrators had a difficult time countering her solid arguments. Another story that supported this fantasy of "naive and inexperienced" was the prim, petite elementary teacher who sat in the back of the bargaining session and nodded her head like a bird. "You've seen the kind that sit on a drinking glass and go up and down all the time? She's just like woodpecker on a rotten log back there. Her head bobbing up and down. I wonder if she is going to sleep. We all were laughing about it, not to put her down, but it was great tension release." This fantasy was obviously chained out during the administrator's caucus meeting. It not only released tension but became a way of interpreting the teacher's actions and expectations in the negotiation.

The language administrators used characterized both the actual negotiations and the administrators' caucus meetings. Negotiations are like "candy bars that the administration has in its possession. It's not how much

you can increase your stock, but how little you have to give away." Chuck, our negotiator, keeps a "steady hand" on the tiller of the bargaining process. He builds trust with the teachers and they think of him as reliable and honest. Caucus meetings are like the football team at half time. They explore "Hey, what did you see? Is there an opening we can go to?" We have the espirit de corps that develops around a management image. It's easier to hold the ranks together when we think we're on a divine mission--with a corner on the truth.

Rhetorical Vision. Overall, the administrators viewed bargaining as a necessary ritual. It serves a symbolic purpose, like "going to church on Sunday morning." Spending two or three concentrated weeks in this decision exchange process makes people feel that they are representing some big entities. It is not the settlement nor the final outcome that makes a difference--teachers never look at the contract. Most teachers couldn't tell you what was in the contract. It is the symbolic process of producing a contract, by sharing unsolved problems, and by releasing tensions built up in the "pressure cooker" of the school year. It is a tradition that keeps people thinking that everything is normal.

Teachers' Perspective

Procedural Rituals. The teachers shared a similar rhetorical vision, but they differed in their views of the rituals of the caucus sessions. They, too, described this year's bargaining episode as informal. Joking was commonplace at the table. The exchange of written proposals and counterproposals with long caucus sessions during the day reduced the need for lengthy night sessions. Also, a limited use of side-bar sessions in which negotiators would meet without their bargaining teams made the negotiations more open and informal. In the past, Chuck, the administrator's negotiator used these side-bar sessions

to his advantage. The teachers followed the general practice of not initiating any issues that they didn't want to change. Neither side developed strategies to deceive the other--both sides are too astute about the bargaining process for this practice.

The teachers' caucus, unlike the administrators' caucus, consisted of careful agendas, free and lively argument, and 2-to-3 hour meetings that hammered out strategies and counterproposals. These differed markedly from past caucus meetings in which, Bonnie, the past negotiator shared only the information she wanted the teachers to hear and seldom included teachers' ideas in official counteroffers. The teachers were well-organized and well-prepared; they extracted sections from previous contracts, typed up new proposals, and presented an overall image of competency. A ritual that they adopted from the administrators was to make a "bottom-line" proposal to signal the final stages of negotiation. This counterproposal stripped their requests to the bare minimum eliminating exaggerated demands and "buffer" requests. The teachers viewed their use of this strategy as a big risk, but they felt that this move switched the power from management to the teachers.

Fantasy Themes. The teachers also shared fantasies of outside "enemies" who made bargaining difficult. Hence, both sides converged on the belief that "outsiders" were the villains. In the teacher's view, John, the accountant, held the purse strings. As one teacher explained, "Nobody understands John. He has a way of complicating an already complex budget by using 18-month fiscal reports for a 12-month time frame. He is always talking around the figures and questions and he typically takes his vacation at crucial times in the negotiation. Thus, he has to be called in Florida to see if it's okay to go with a particular salary figure. No one, not even the administrators, trust the accountant."

Stories about Bonnie as the hard-hitting tough teacher's negotiator of past years cast her in the role of an outsider who did not uphold the ritual of informal negotiations or adhere to the new rhetorical vision of cooperation. The scapegoats or villains in both sets of fantasy themes were outsiders who couldn't be trusted or who held a different vision of the bargaining reality.

Stories about the administration cast them as well-intentioned, disorganized, ill-prepared and not solidly unified. One member of the team was effectively nullified by hard evidence that her building was responsible for the misuse of teacher's files. She ended up dropping out of the bargaining or not talking about controversial issues when she was present. Stories about Chuck, the administrator's negotiator, casts him as defensive at times but reliable and generally trustworthy. Teachers who knew him well told stores about his underhanded manipulative plays and his desire for control.

Rhetorical Vision. The teachers characterized bargaining as a event in which labor and management exchange ideas, two different philosophies are presented, the other side listens to your arguments. Bargaining, then, becomes a communication forum. It is an arena for discussing problems from the lowest level of the organization with members of the highest level of management. Bargaining allows people to discuss problems that have been totally ignored by building administrators. Problems are explored, unlike group discussion, through a trade-off of proposals. As one teacher explains, "It's like a tennis match. The administration is always saying that the ball is in our court. In truth, it goes back and forth like ping pong, only the ball gets bigger as it rolls along until someone says, I'm going to hold the ball, you give up something, and let's make a decision." Another teacher remarked, "Bargaining is not really a powerplay--only the State Legislature has real power; they control the purse strings." But bargaining is a form of symbolic power, a

ritual for demonstrating that teachers can have a say in the management of their working conditions.

Discussion

This paper presents a preliminary assessment of the teachers' and administrators' symbolic meaning of a bargaining rite. As such, it serves as a preliminary test of Trice & Beyer's (1984) model of bargaining as conflict reduction. Since this paper focuses exclusively on the interview data, we are unable to track the sharing of the fantasies and the use of specific rituals and language patterns.

The interview data, however, reveals some interesting conclusions about the rhetorical vision this district has for collective bargaining. This rhetorical vision casts "insiders" as heroes and outsiders as "villains." Past experiences of bargaining difficulties trace back to lawyers, fact finders, and the school accountant. These "outsiders" fail to understand the rituals and unique conditions under which the two teams operate. This applies to Bonnie, who was the tough-minded past teacher's negotiator, and who broke the rules, acted autocratically, and employed side-bars sessions. Both sides then achieved a sense of unity as they built a vision based on the "outsiders" as enemies. Both sides attributed motives to the other side that reflected good intensions. When problems occurred and stumbling blocks looked big, the administrators would fault the teachers' naive and inexperienced background in negotiations; the teachers would attribute problems to the administrators' disorganization and lack of preparation. Both sides viewed the procedural rituals as informal, systematic, and effective.

As a bargaining rite, this negotiation deviated markedly from the model laid out by Trice & Beyer (1984). Perhaps the prototypical posturing, extreme

offers, and unreasonable demands, typify the early stages of developing a bargaining relationship or perhaps industrial as opposed to public sector bargaining employs these rituals annually. Thus, the ritualistic behaviors in the negotiation did not parallel their view of bargaining as a rite of conflict reduction.

The rhetorical visions of bargaining, however, were consistent with the manifest and latent consequences described by Trice & Beyer (1984). Namely, bargaining served to minimize status differences. Participation in this rite signaled a willingness to cope with problems and to pay attention to disputants. Bargaining functioned more as a renewal rite for reassuring that something is being done about problems. The contract, as a materialistic symbol of negotiations, signified that teachers have a say in decisions about their fate. This teacher's negotiation, however, did not serve as a rite for blowing off steam or channeling hostilities. Rather it functioned to reinforce the current authority system and communicated that everything is normal--our traditions are sacred. Future research will attempt to ascertain how the fantasy themes and rhetorical visions evolved and <u>why</u> they develop this particular social reality for bargaining participants.

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